



# Preventing AI-Enabled Harms Through Digital Media Literacy

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## About MediaSmarts

- Canada's not-for-profit centre for digital media literacy
- Our vision is that everyone is empowered to engage with all forms of media confidently and critically

We achieve this through:

- Research and policy
- Education
- Public awareness and engagement



# Preventing AI-Enabled Harms Through Digital Media Literacy

AI-enabled harms like deepfakes and image-based abuse are not just technical problems — they are **social, relational and educational challenges.**



# Why AI-Enabled Harms Matter

Generative AI makes it easier to create realistic fake images, video and audio

- Non-consensual intimate deepfakes disproportionately target women and girls
- Harm continues even when people know content is fake: shame, fear, withdrawal, reputational damage



# The Equity Gap in AI Use

## Access does not equal safety, empowerment or support

AI tools are often framed as universally empowering, but in practice their impacts are shaped by context, power and systems.

What we are seeing and why this is an equity issue:

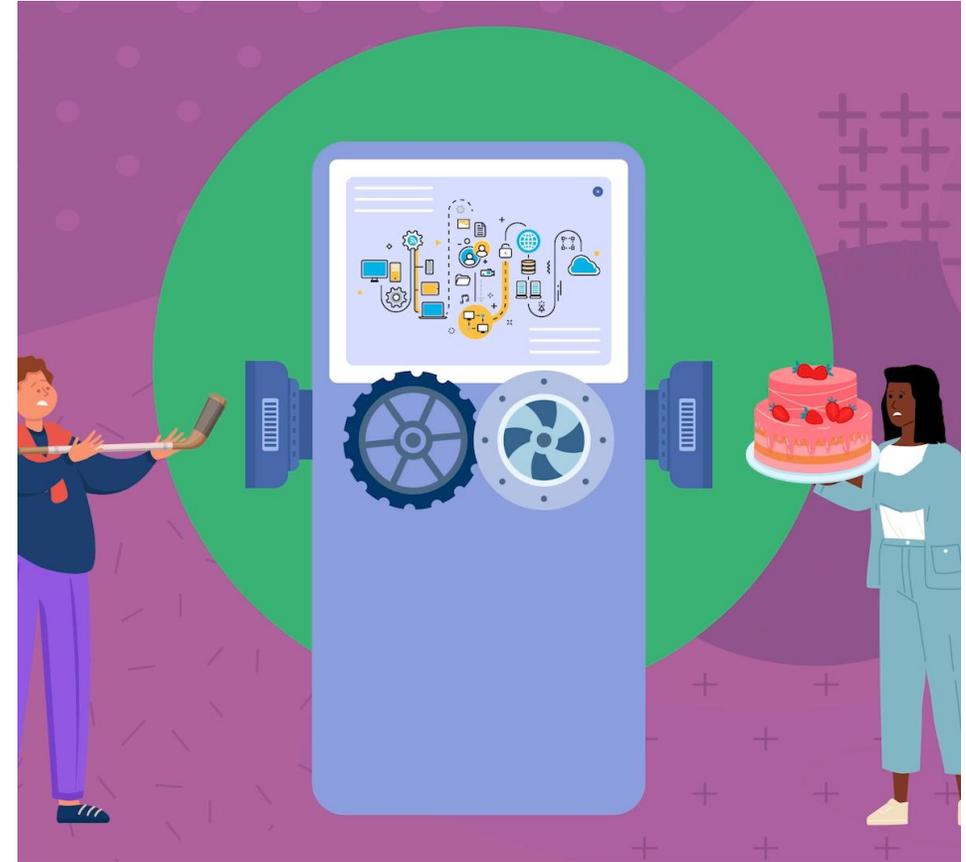
- GBV Survivors are often using AI to compensate for structural barriers
- Service providers are often left to manage AI-driven impacts without guidance or training
- Under-resourced organizations may face unintended consequences from AI use (e.g. privacy breaches and data sharing)

# AI Literacy: A Prevention Tool

AI literacy helps people anticipate risk, not just respond to harm.

## What AI literacy includes:

- Understanding how AI systems are trained, optimized and monetized
- Knowing why AI systems can replicate bias and stereotypes
- Recognizing that AI tools are designed to influence behaviour and attention



# An empowerment focused digital media literacy (DML) model for AI-enabled harms

Our approach combines:

AI & algorithm literacy (how AI systems work)

Critical thinking (questioning authenticity and intent)

Social-emotional learning (how harm feels and spreads)

Trauma- and violence-informed practice (prioritizing safety, choice, dignity, and empowerment)

**A DML approach builds capacity and confidence.**



# What We Teach: AI-Enabled Harms & Practical Responses

Effective prevention requires digital media literacy tailored to unique contexts and audiences, equipping youth, educators and families to understand AI-enabled harms and respond with confidence and resilience.

## Key content areas:

- Deepfakes
- Misinformation & AI-generated content
- Non-consensual intimate images

## Audiences:

*Youth:* Teen Fact-Checking Network

*Educators:* Classroom lessons

*Parents and Caregivers:* Guides, Tipsheets, and Videos

## Building Resilience to Harm

AI literacy is not about mastering technology — it's about building resilience, equity and informed participation in a rapidly changing digital world.



When we build AI literacy, we:

Reduce vulnerability to harm

Strengthen empathy and accountability

Support safer participation for everyone

AI-enabled harms are not only technical challenges — they are social, institutional and equity issues.



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